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AGRO-INPUTS PROJECT IN BANGLADESH

Annual Performance Report (Year 4: October 1, 2015– September 30, 2016)



Prepared for the United States Agency for International Development under USAID Cooperative Agreement No. AID-388-A-12-00005, Agro-Inputs Project in Bangladesh implemented by CNFA.

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USAID Agro-Inputs Project in Bangladesh

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Cover photo: AIRN agro-retailer Hafiza Khatun demonstrates for women farmers in Chuadanga how to use a protective face mask while applying pesticides. Photo: AIRN

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Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| ACI | Advanced Chemical Industries |
| ACME | Accelerating Capacity for Monitoring and Evaluation |
| AESA | USAID/Agriculture Extension Support Activity Project |
| AGM | Annual General Meeting |
| AIN | USAID/Aquaculture for Incomes and Nutrition |
| AIP | USAID/Agro-Inputs Project in Bangladesh |
| AIRN | Agro-Inputs Retailers Network |
| AVC | USAID/Agricultural Value Chains Project |
| BAU | Bangladesh Agricultural University |
| BCPA | Bangladesh Crop Protection Association |
| BFA | Bangladesh Fertilizer Association |
| BMT | Business Management Training |
| BPRSSP | Bangladesh Policy Research and Strategy Support Program |
| BOD | Board of Directors |
| CBSG | Capacity Building Services Group |
| CIMMYT | International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center |
| CPP | Crop Protection Product |
| DAE | Department of Agricultural Extension |
| DGHS | Director General for Health Services |
| DQA | Data Quality Assessment |
| ECM | Empty Container Management |
| EMMP | Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan |
| FFD | Farmer Field Days |
| FGPC | Fruit Tree Germplasm Centre |
| FQS | Farmer Query System |
| FTF | Feed the Future |
| GIS | Geographic Information System |
| GM | Genetically Modified |
| GOB | Government of Bangladesh |
| GPS | Global Positioning System |
| HR | Human Resources |
| IRRI | International Rice Research Institute |
| IT | Information Technology |
| ISO | International Organization for Standardization |
| LOP | Life of Project |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MIS | Market Information System |
| MOA | Ministry of Agriculture |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MPOB | Monthly Price Outlook Bulletin |
| NAAFCO | National Agricultural Fertilizer Company |
| OCA | Organizational Capacity Assessment |
| OCD | Organizational Capacity Development |
| PO | Program Officer |
| PNGO | Partner NGO (Non-Government Organizations) |
| PSA | Public Service Announcements |
| SMS | Short Message Service |
| SSA | Spatial Systems Associates, Inc. |
| TOT | Training of Trainers |

| | |
|-------|---|
| TSB | Toxicology Society of Bangladesh |
| USAID | U.S. Agency for International Development |
| USG | United States Government |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

Project Background

Key Project Details

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Title: | Agro-Inputs Project (AIP) in Bangladesh |
| Start Date: | September 17, 2012 |
| Project Duration: | Five Years |
| Type of Award: | Cooperative Agreement No. AID-388-A-12-00005 |
| Award Amount: | \$14,028,602 |
| Prime Implementer: | CNFA |
| Sub Implementers (long-term): | Spatial Systems Associates Capacity Building Service Group GMark Ashroy Foundation Banchte Shekha Association of Voluntary Actions for Society |

Project Objectives and Interventions

The objective of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Agro-Inputs Project (AIP) in Bangladesh is to improve the supply of quality agricultural inputs through input retailers. Its central effort is the creation of a sustainable Agro-Input Retailers Network (AIRN) through Intervention 1. Interventions 2-4 are designed to work in concert and holistically with Intervention 1. AIP's four interventions and key activities include:

- **Establish an Agro-Inputs Retailers Network:** Creation of AIRN, a first-of-its-kind agro-inputs training organization serving retailers in the Feed the Future (FTF) zone;
- **Improve Effectiveness of Agricultural Inputs Market Information Systems:** Distribution of 115,000 hard copy Monthly Price Outlook Bulletins (MPOB), supported by an innovative Geographic Information System (GIS)-based input market information system (MIS); demand creation for improved quality inputs through 500 demonstration plots;
- **Enhance Knowledge and Application of Quality Standards:** Promotion of input quality standards to 50 input supply companies and 3,000 AIRN retailers. Eight new input quality standards developed by industry associations (with public and private stakeholders) presented to USAID for referral to the Bangladesh Policy Research and Strategy Support Program (BPRSSP); knowledge and demand for quality inputs increased through communications and outreach campaign;
- **Strengthen Local Organizations' Institutional Capacity:** Three organizations receive comprehensive organizational capacity assessment (OCA) and necessary assistance in organizational capacity development (OCD); organizational strengthening of these organizations, and utilization of their technical expertise to implement AIP-related activities via sub-award.

Executive Summary

Intervention 1: Establish an Agro-Input Retailers Network (AIRN)

In Y4, AIP achieved its life of project goal of recruiting 3,000 retailers as AIRN members. Providing basic training to new AIRN retailers – to ensure that they become more knowledgeable on the products they sell - was a major focus for AIP during this year. As of September 2016, AIP had trained and “accredited” 86% of the 3,000 members (2,580), 1,300 (including 135 women) of which were trained during this reporting year. Retailers received training on the “appropriate use and sales of agricultural inputs.” These trainings were organized by AIP Program Officers (POs) and GMark Consulting Limited.

AIP also supported AIRN in organizing its first Annual General Meeting (AGM) in August 2016 with participation of around 200 representatives from 81 AIRN *upazila* committees, development projects, private and public institutions. During the AGM, AIRN Board of Directors from 19 districts were formally elected by *upazila* committee representatives.

In order to advance the AIRN network, AIP organized domestic and international study tours for 120 retailers (including 22 women), which allowed participants to explore agri-business and quality input issues as well as to exchange experiences and best practices among themselves and with international counterparts.

AIP, with support of Syngenta Bangladesh Limited, trained 96 government medical doctors (31 women) on “Handling Pesticide Poisoning” to improve their ability to take immediate action upon recognizing the symptoms of pesticide exposure in patients.

Intervention 2: Improve Effectiveness of Agricultural Inputs Market Information Systems

AIP recorded GIS data for 2,934 of the targeted 3,000 AIRN retailers including each retailer’s detailed portfolio and an option to query retailers based on the type of input sales. AIP also shared data of registered wholesalers and companies working in the FTF zone with an information technology (IT) service provider for creation of the “*Krishi Yellow Pages*” - a collaborative effort among AIP, the USAID/Ag-Extension Support Activity (AESAs) and the USAID/Aquaculture for Incomes and Nutrition (AIN) project - to provide agricultural input supply information via a smart phone “app” and the internet.

Approximately 50,000 copies of Monthly Price Outlook Bulletin (MPOB) containing an updated list of commonly sold agro-inputs and their wholesale prices were disseminated among AIP’s stakeholders. The bulletins also included information, news, and photos of various agronomic queries and events, e.g., AIRN’s first AGM, a question and answer section on the AIRN membership process and payment of fees, recommended use of fertilizers, and tips on how to differentiate between quality and inferior seed.

Intervention 3: Enhance Knowledge and Application of Quality Standards

AIP increased its communication efforts in Year 4, publishing three booklets on quality seed, fertilizer and safe use of pesticides; four posters on agro-inputs and nutritious crops; and installing 22 billboards for improving knowledge and practices of AIRN retailers and their farmers. The project also disseminated messages on quality seed, fertilizer and safe use of pesticides among AIRN retailers and farmers through three public service announcements

(PSAs) which began broadcasting on three leading national TV channels. In addition, AIP signed a service agreement with ATN News, one of the leading 24-hour news channels, to air five episodes of “Connecting Bangladesh” - a question and answer based program that will connect AIRN retailers (and farmers) with subject matter experts in Dhaka.

In addition, AIP sent approximately 500,000 AIRN-branded SMSs to retailers and farmers intended to brand “AIRN” as a trusted source for agricultural information. These SMSs promoted AIRN shops as one-stop service centers for quality agro-inputs and agronomic advice.

AIP supported ACI Seed Ltd. and Naafco Group in selecting an external auditor (SGS Bangladesh) to assist the companies in obtaining and implementing international certification (ISO). In addition, the project engaged an IT service provider to create an inputs traceability system.

Intervention 4: Strengthening Local Organizations’ Institutional Capacity

AIP, via the Capacity Building Services Group (CBSG), conducted Organizational Capacity Development (OCD) of two associations: Bangladesh Crop Protection Association (BCPA) and Bangladesh Fertilizer Association (BFA) focusing on human resources (HR) policy and procedure development and financial management. AIP also assisted the associations to develop their websites.

AIP facilitated a joint training for these two associations on writing grant proposals for USAID funding in August 2016. The participants of the training learned how to design a project, develop a logical framework, and prepare cost proposals in conformity with USAID requirements.

Intervention 1: Establish an Agro-Input Retailers Network

1.1 Develop AIRN as a High Quality Technical Training and Advisory Services Center

1.1.1 Create Modules and Train Master Trainers to Conduct Quality Training

Retailers' Training

AIP/AIRN emphasized converting AIRN associate members into “accredited” retailers through basic training. AIP, in collaboration with GMark Consulting Limited (GMark) and Advanced Chemical Industries Limited (ACI), trained approximately 1,300 (including 135 women) on the appropriate use and sales of agricultural inputs. The participants reported that learning how to conduct seed germination tests and quality sampling of fertilizers were particularly useful lessons, in addition to discussions on how to ensure client satisfaction and maintain business records.

In addition, AIP provided advanced training to 312 retailers on the safe use of pesticides, rice technology and production through agricultural mechanization, and the Farmer Query System (FQS), a mobile app-based technical advisory service. These trainings were organized in partnership with Syngenta Bangladesh Limited, IRRI/CIMMYT, and USAID/AESA, respectively.

Program Officers' Training

To better equip AIP's 20 field-based POs with technical expertise, AIP and the Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) Fruit Tree Germplasm Centre (FGPC) jointly organized a practical training session on crop production technologies and agronomic/horticultural practices. Another capacity building training for POs was organized focusing on training facilitation and presentation skills, leadership, and teamwork in August 2016 in order to strengthen their ability to conduct “direct delivery” basic training to AIRN associate members. In addition, a select number of AIP POs have been identified as strong trainers and are being further groomed to conduct stand-alone training on behalf of AIRN, which is poised to become a for-fee training entity upon closure of AIP (see section 1.2.3).

Doctors Training

Jointly with Syngenta Bangladesh Limited, AIP trained 96 government medical doctors (31 women) on handling pesticide poisoning (following a government certified module) in Patuakhali, Barisal, Khulna and Faridpur to improve the ability of doctors to take fast action with patients presenting pesticide intoxication. Participants found it a useful and timely initiative as they frequently handle pesticide-affected patients at their district-level medical centers. From the training, they learned about updated information on pesticide active ingredients, their risks, and techniques for patient management. The Director General for Health Services (DGHS) and the Toxicology Society of Bangladesh (TSB) also collaborated in the training.

1.1.2 Illustrate Best Practices via Domestic and International Study Tours

Domestic study tour

This year, AIP organized seven domestic study tours for 111 retailers (21 women).

In February and March 2016, 39 retailers (seven women) participated in two domestic study tours in Bogra, Gaibandha and Jessore. Among them, 14 AIRN retailers visited Syngenta's

Learning and Development Centre in Bogra and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation's Local Service Provider (LSP) model in Gaibandha, while 25 retailers joined in the Agro-Tech Fair in Jessore. Visiting Syngenta's learning center allowed AIRN retailers to observe systematic seed grading and they discussed in detail the need for seed moisture maintenance. Retailers have also become more interested in demonstrating seed germination in small pots in their shops.

AIP also organized five domestic study tours for 72 retailers (14 women) from eight districts. In order to exchange experiences and best practices among members toward advancing AIRN as a whole, 58 newly recruited accredited members of Barisal, Faridpur, Meherpur & Satkhira (more remote parts of AIP's working area) visited Fultola, Jhenaidah, Jessore & Bagerhat AIRN *upazila* committees who are more experienced and organized in terms of their activities. From the domestic study visits retailers mainly learned about various techniques of rice production, fee-based service provision models and improved shop maintenance. Based on their experience working with higher-performing retailers, members from the Shatkira AIRN *upazila* committee created an "action plan" for business growth, including regular visits to their neighboring AIRN member shops, organization of an *upazila*-level meeting in early 2017, and ensuring that AIRN retailers are using and offering for sale to farmers materials for the safe handling of pesticides.

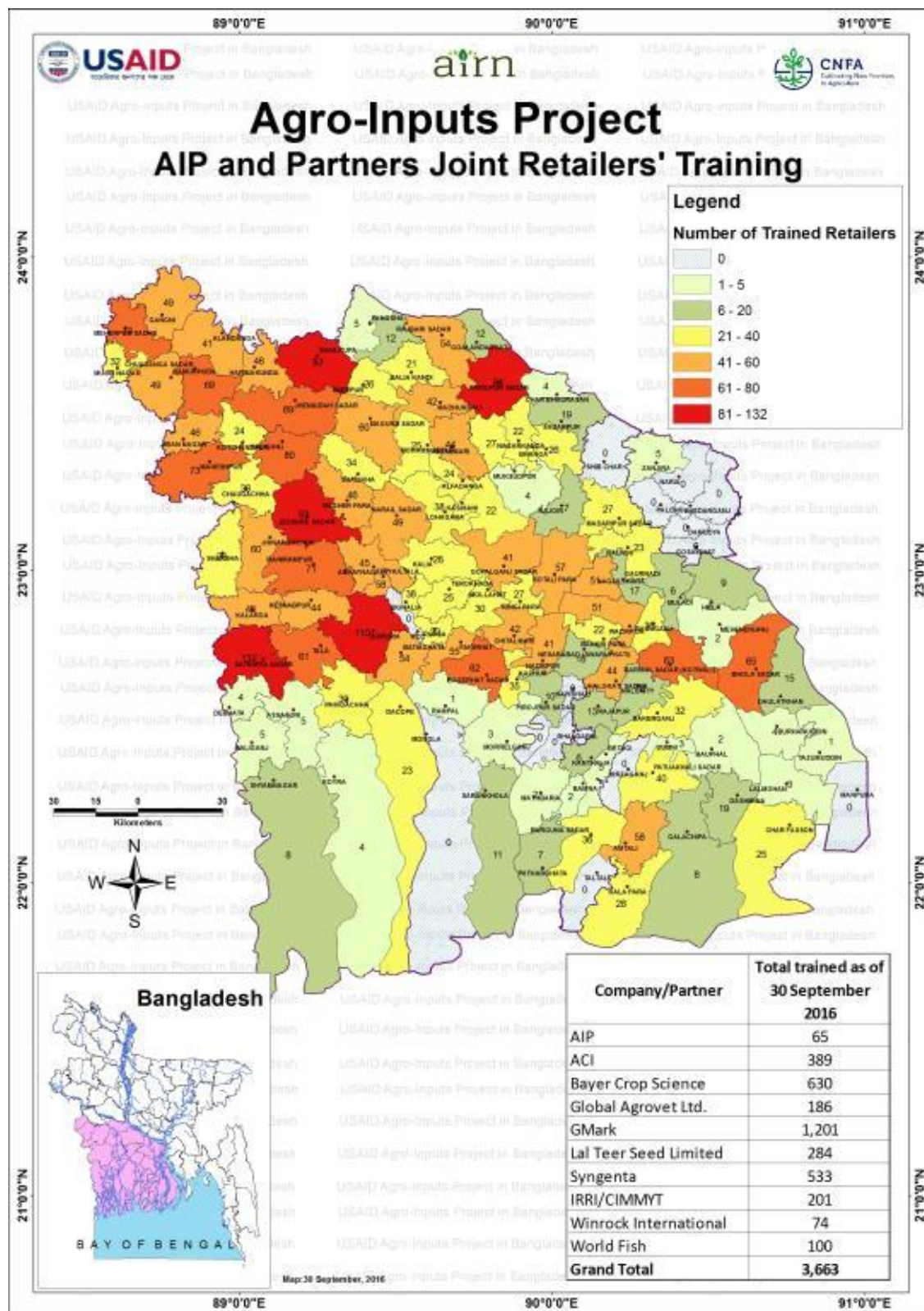
Women retailers (14) visited Lal Teer Seed Ltd.'s seed research and development center as well as ACI's pesticide formulation center in Gazipur to learn about the processing of quality seeds and pesticides. This visit was designed to increase participation of women in domestic study tours and to allow participants to observe and replicate best practices such as proper input handling and the provision of advisory services to farmers for judicious use of pesticides.

For the first time, participants in these tours (as well as the international study tour described below) were charged a registration fee in order to raise funds for AIRN and to create a culture of paying for training services.

International study tour

In September 2016, nine retailers took part in an international study tour in Thailand hosted by Kasetsart University to explore agri-business and quality inputs. The participants visited the Asia Pacific Seed Association, Thailand Crop Protection Association, and the Seed Association of Thailand, as well as seed-fertilizer-pesticide companies, and government institutes. This tour created an opportunity for AIRN retailers to interact with successful Thai agro-inputs supplier associations and service organizations to understand their role in assuring the provision of quality services in promoting the interest of input retailers. Through the study tour, AIRN retailers obtained income generation ideas (for AIRN) such as selling business shares, organizing trainings and seminars on inputs and becoming distributors of branded inputs. Upon returning from the study tour, the retailers confirmed their commitment to selling quality inputs, displaying proper shop infrastructure and employing improved management techniques to set an example for other AIRN members.

Figure 1: District-wise Training of AIRN Members



1.2 Develop Governance, Membership Structure, and Training and Services Strategy for AIRN

1.2.1 Identify Flexible Governance

In Y4Q1, AIRN was formally registered in the Office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms as a not-for-profit company. AIRN is organized into 81 AIRN *upazila* committees which carry forward planned AIRN activities at the local level. These formal committees consist of 11 regional representatives each and are designated to collect membership fees and monthly dues with a link to the central AIRN “secretariat.”

With AIP’s support, the first AIRN Annual General Meeting (AGM) was organized in August 2016 with participation of around 200 representatives from 81 AIRN *upazila* committees, development projects, private and public institutions. During the AGM, the AIRN Board of Directors from 19 districts were formally elected. In addition, the AGM created the opportunity for AIRN members to forge relationships with senior representatives from private input supply companies (e.g., Ispahani, ACI, Partex Agro, and others) who “pitched” their quality products, introduced new financial offers, and discussed business plans with retailers.

1.2.2 Define Membership Structure

As of September 2016, AIP had accredited (trained) 86% members of AIRN out its membership of more than 3000 retailers. In addition, the integration of 33 women retailers in 31 AIRN *upazila* committees is a major accomplishment - among them, five women hold the position of vice president; one as sales and procurement committee secretary; with 27 involved as Executive Committee members. This inclusion allows women to serve in leadership roles and expand their professional experience.

From its membership, AIRN currently uses a tiered fee structure i.e., membership fees, monthly fees, and fee for services such as trainings or study tours. To date, almost 70% of AIRN accredited members have paid the onetime membership fee and regularly pay monthly dues directly to their respective *upazila* committees.

1.2.3 Build Additional Services

AIRN’s strategy formulation

A strategy was developed to build capacity for AIRN to act as a training institute – a commercial arm of AIRN which will generate revenue and serve the agriculture industry through technical training. In addition, AIRN also explored options to serve as a distribution hub for quality inputs.

Empty Container Management (ECM) Study

AIP, in partnership with BCPA, has started working on an empty container management (ECM) study with Waste Concern Consultants Ltd., a research firm which is analyzing the level of pesticide bottle toxic residue before and after rinsing, as well as viable options for empty container disposal in AIP’s working area. The study will be concluded in November 2016. A follow-on pilot will look for ways to engage AIRN members in container aggregation and disposal (recycling).

AIRN Call Center

In September 2016, AIRN Call Center investigated complaints, including the low growth of

saplings and low yield of hybrid seed in Baliakandi *upazila* of Rajbari District and reported the problem to the concerned company for required remedial actions. Overall, the AIRN Call Center received approximately 1,500 calls this year which were mostly requests for agronomic support and inquiries. AIP referred the callers to the concerned service providers (agricultural hotlines, such as the Agricultural Information Service (AIS)). In order to disseminate information on questions frequently posed to the Call Center, AIP has begun including answers to frequently asked questions in the MPOB, SMS messages and on the AIP website and project Facebook page.

In Y4Q4, AIP encouraged female input purchasers (farmers) were specifically encouraged to make phone calls to AIRN Call Center whenever they encounter problems with their purchased inputs, as it was noted that use of the call center by women was very low.

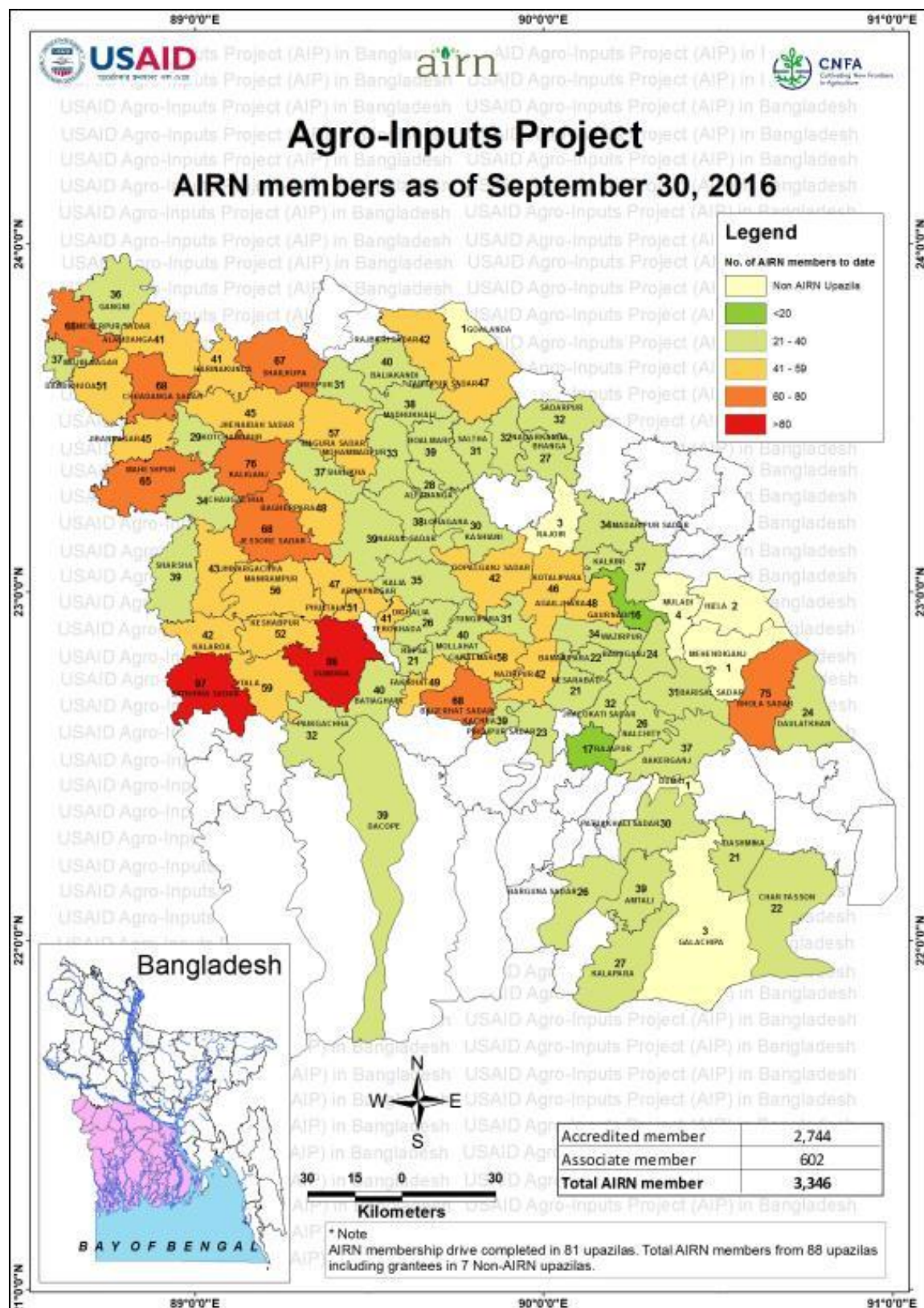
Women were targeted through direct phone calls to around 100 female farmers who are listed in AIP's monitoring and evaluation data base. At present, on an average six female farmers call to AIRN Call Center monthly. While AIP has no specific target indicator for usage of the call center, it will continue to strive to ensure barriers are removed for female retailers to access technical assistance.

1.3.1 Increase AIRN Membership among Agro-Retailers

Membership Drive

The number of AIRN total members (associate plus accredited (those who have gone through the requisite basic training and signed the AIRN Code of Conduct)) gradually increased to 3,214 in Year 4, despite there being no special recruitment drive activity from AIP. AIRN perceives this as a positive indication that new members are being recruited through word of mouth as other retailers perceive AIRN as a brand of quality.

Figure 2: AIRN Retailer Distribution



Summary of Intervention 1 Key Activities for Next Year

Retailers' Training

AIP will train approximately 600 retailers toward AIRN accreditation during its final project year in collaboration with GMark, DAE technical experts, and AIP POs. During the year, capacity building for existing AIRN accredited retailers, including AIP's women grantee retailers, will continue through refresher trainings and one-on-one counselling.

As AIP's focus is to establish AIRN as a one-of-a-kind training organization and service provider, training facilitation will gradually be turned over to AIRN staff over the course of project year. AIRN will offer fee-based basic and advanced trainings on agri-business, ethics and agronomic topics to AIRN members as well as to beneficiaries from other donor-funded projects. In order to promote AIRN among stakeholders, AIP will support a series of AIRN outreach events such as "pitching" sessions on AIRN and its offerings to potential clients such as, government, private sector, national associations, Feed the Future (FTF) and other donor-funded projects, NGOs, and most importantly, the farmer customers whom AIRN retailers serve.

In Y4, AIP found that the 3-day basic training was not sufficient for women retailers to master issues related to agro-chemicals and plant pathology. Therefore, the project will engage a technical consultant in Y5 to make regular site visits to women retailer shops to help build their individual technical capabilities.

Identify Flexible Governance

AIP will support AIRN to develop a small management team or "secretariat" (main office) for operating its day-to-day activities more independently and to be aligned with the direction set by the AIRN Board of Directors (BoD). The project will also support AIRN in complying with local rules and regulations as a registered not-for-profit company, including holding a BoD meeting once every two months, an annual general meeting (AGM), *upazila* or district-wide meetings and submitting regular audit reports. In addition to membership fees and training, AIRN will explore various funding opportunities, both local and international.

Build Additional Services

In Y5, to generate income for AIRN beyond AIP, the project will assist the network to focus mostly on two services – training and distributing agro-inputs that includes micronutrients, seeds and pesticides.

Through a debriefing session in late 2016, AIP will share findings of a study on ECM jointly conducted with BCPA. In this session with public and private stakeholders, AIP will explore plastic pesticide container recycling scheme opportunities for AIRN retailers. After that discussion, AIP plans to facilitate a pilot on ECM in the FTF zone.

Increase AIRN membership

As begun in Y4, the AIRN *upazila* committees will recruit new members with minimal support from AIP. At the same time, the AIP management team will take steps to accredit the associate members via training and regular participation in network activities.

Intervention 2: Improve Effectiveness of Agricultural Inputs Market Information Systems

2.1 Develop GIS for Agricultural Input Supply and Demand

2.1.1 Develop Input-Specific MIS Tool

To create an easy visual presentation of AIP demo plots among USAID stakeholders, AIP developed GIS map layers of AIP's established demo plots for USAID's GeoPortal. Data for 2,934 of the targeted 3,000 AIRN retailers were recorded in AIP's MIS and options were created to query retailers based on type of input sales, along with detailed portfolio of each retailer, e.g., name, address, inputs sold, annual estimated sales, and number of shop employees. In addition, AIP's partner Spatial Systems Associates (SSA) created an easy user guide containing instructions for basic designs, regular updates, operational functions, and security for future stakeholders of the system. AIP and USAID have engaged in discussions surrounding the transfer of the MIS tool to support other USAID initiatives as the project enters its final year.

From the beginning of Year 4, AIP has been seeking an institution to transfer AIP's MIS project to, following the end of AIP. After discussions with USAID, AIP collaborated with USAID/CIMMYT to demonstrate how other projects can customize AIP's MIS tool to meet the unique project needs. While AIP has not yet solidified a handover project for the MIS tool, AIP will continue to seek opportunities in Year 5.

In Y4Q2, AIP shared data of registered wholesalers and companies working in the FTF zone with the IT provider Win Miaki Ltd. For creation of the "*Krishi* Yellow Pages," a collaborative initiative between AIP, USAID/AESA, and USAID/Aquaculture for Incomes and Nutrition (AIN) projects to provide agricultural input supply information to farmers or retailers via an android "app" and the internet.

2.2 Improve Dissemination of Input Supply Information

2.2.1 Create and Distribute Directory of Input Supply Companies and Wholesalers

Print copies of the directory, consisting of more than 1,700 entries of agro-input companies and wholesalers, were disseminated to AIRN accredited members in Y4Q2.

2.3 Improve Agro-Inputs Monthly Price Information

2.3.1 Create and Distribute Agro-Inputs Monthly Price Outlook Bulletin (MPOB)

AIP printed and distributed around 50,000 copies of Monthly Price Outlook Bulletin (MPOB) showcasing a list of the most sold agro-inputs and their prices in Y4. The bulletins also included information, news and photos of various agronomic issues and events like AIRN's first AGM, a question and answer section describing the AIRN membership process and payment of fees, AIRN's relief distribution among flood-affected people in Faridpur, recommended use of fertilizers, and tips on how to differentiate between quality and inferior seed.

2.4 Increase Awareness and Demand for Quality Inputs

2.4.1 Conduct Collaborative Demos and Field Days

A total of 165 demo plots were established for demonstrating new varieties of *aman* and *boro*¹ season rice, maize, chili, lentil, tomato, bottle gourd, pumpkin, bitter gourd, ridge gourd, ash gourd, snake gourd, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, sesame and eggplant. These demos were organized by Syngenta, ACI, Lal Teer Seed Ltd., and the USAID/AESA project.

To showcase performance of the selected agro-inputs, 358 farmers' field days (FFD) were organized for more than 11,000 farmers (486 women).

Summary of Intervention 2 Key Activities for Next Year

MIS

In Y5, AIP will work to finish MIS's remaining development work through finalizing the map component, creating a color-coded feature class query, and developing backend tools to easily overlay other map features. AIP will explore donor-funded projects and Bangladeshi companies to maintain the system after the closure of AIP. In discussion with USAID/Bangladesh, AIP proposes that USAID use the MIS to support other existing project's GIS activities to improve their planning process as well as to identify quality agro-inputs via AIRN retailers.

MPOB

In Y5, AIP will print and disseminate 9-10 issues of Agro-Inputs MPOB among the retailers which highlights wholesale prices of seeds, fertilizers, and plant protection products. In addition to price data for agro-inputs, MPOB has begun and will continue to highlight AIRN news and agronomic advice through frequently asked questions (FAQs).

Demonstrations

With the objective of establishing 60 field demonstrations in late 2016 in collaboration with Supreme Seed Company Ltd., AIP will assess at least 80 proposed demo plots following its environmental criteria. Based on the mutual interests of the farmer, retailer, and Supreme Seed Company, demos will focus on corn, lentil, onion and rice in Jessore, Faridpur and Barisal regions.

Intervention 3: Enhance Knowledge and Application of Quality Standards

3.1 Enhance Stakeholders Knowledge on Industry Quality Standards

3.1.1 Promote Quality Inputs through Multi-Media Campaigns

To carry forward AIP's "Did You Know: Quality Inputs are Around You?" multi-media campaign for raising awareness and use of quality agro-inputs among retailers and farmers, the project worked with MediaCom and Expressions Ltd., two leading communications and media firms, to publish printed communications materials, create Public Service Announcements (PSA) and create content for a SMS campaign. Along with producing posters, billboards, leaflets, notebooks, PSAs on quality seeds, fertilizers and safe use of

¹ Aman (August-December); Boro (December-April)

pesticides in Y4Q1, AIP also focused on disseminating messages on quality agro-inputs and AIRN through airing of PSA on three national TV channels.

3.1.2 Reach Agro-Retailers and Farmers via Development and Distribution of Publications on Quality Standards

Public Service Announcement (PSAs)

AIP started airing PSAs on quality seeds, fertilizers and safe use of pesticides on three leading national TV channels i.e. Channel i, ATN Bangla and NTV. The PSAs will be aired up to March 2017 to raise awareness on quality agro-inputs among retailers and farmers.

Discussion on program on TV

AIP signed a service agreement with ATN News, to air five episodes of “Connecting Bangladesh” a Q&A session program that will connect AIRN retailers (and farmers) with subject matter experts in Dhaka. The key topics of the program will be AIRN and availability of quality inputs, women agro-retailers, quality seed, fertilizer, and safe use of pesticides.



Rural AIRN retailers and farmers connect via satellite to a Ministry of Agriculture expert in Dhaka via “Connecting Bangladesh”.

Billboards

As a part of AIP’s multi-media communications campaign, the project installed 22 billboards on the safe use of pesticides and on quality agro-inputs. The major messages of the billboards are “be aware while using pesticides: be healthy and keep the environment sound” as well as “use quality agro-inputs following the right quantity and methods for higher yield.”

Short Message Services (SMS)

Approximately 500,000 SMSs were sent to 27,000 retailers and farmers with AIRN branding intended to create AIRN as a trusted source for agricultural information. These SMSs promoted AIRN shops as one-stop service centers for quality agro-inputs and agronomic advice. In addition, messages on quality seeds, fertilizers, safe use of pesticides, the viewing of PSAs and AIRN membership were disseminated.

Publications

In Y4Q1, AIP published and disseminated three booklets on quality seeds, how to recognize quality fertilizers, and the safe use of pesticides. In addition, four posters on 1) quality seeds; 2) quality fertilizers; 3) safe use of CPPs; and 4) nutritionally dense crops for children and pregnant and/or lactating mothers (co-branded with USAID/AIN) as well as one leaflet on safe use of pesticides were produced and disseminated among retailers, farmers and other stakeholders.

Two bi-annual AIRN newsletters were published in January and July 2016 (in Bangla and English) highlighting the March Agro-Tech Fair (see section 3.3.1 and attached success story), medical training on handling pesticide poisoning, as well images and stories from AIRN retailers.

A newspaper supplement was published on 27 September 2016 highlighting the progress of 150 women agro-retailers in three leading Bangla dailies - Prothom Alo, Bangladesh Protidin and Dainik Purbanchal. The supplement showcased the progress of women retailers,

challenges they face, “before and after” photo features, and their role in providing advisory services to farmers.

3.2 Better Quality Adherence among Private Sector Agro-Input Companies

3.2.1 Improve Supply-Side Quality through Certification and Traceability

ISO certification

To facilitate obtaining and implementing international certification (ISO), AIP supported ACI Seed Ltd and Naafco Group in selecting an external auditor (SGS Bangladesh). AIP is also assessing the needs of five additional agro-input companies toward obtaining international standards certification(s). AIP also facilitated one workshop on developing formats, procedures and other certification documentation with key personnel from Naafco Group.

Traceability

In order to mitigate the potential negative effects of purchasing counterfeit agro-inputs, AIP engaged an IT service provider, Win Miaki Ltd., to provide technical services toward creation of a quality inputs traceability system. The project and Win Miaki will work with Naafco (an agro-inputs company) to create and test the traceability system for 6-9 months. A series of training programs will be organized in the field to familiarize AIRN retailers with the traceability system.

3.3 Promote Knowledge of Quality Standards through Agricultural Exhibitions

3.3.1 Conduct AIRN Agro-Tech Fairs



Dr. Md. Humayun Kabir, Deputy Commissioner, Jessore, addresses the audience as chief guest during inauguration ceremony of the AIRN Agro-Tech Fair.

Photo credit: AIP/AIRN

AIP/AIRN organized an Agro-Tech Fair in March 2016 in Jessore in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

Focusing on the theme “Did You Know: Quality Agro-Inputs Are around You,” 33 national companies displayed quality seeds, fertilizers, crop protection products, floriculture and nurseries, agro-tech machinery, and other services. Dr. Md. Humayun Kabir, Deputy Commissioner, Jessore inaugurated the fair as Chief Guest. The fair attracted 10,000 visitors, and displayed 45 new products. The fair drew attention of local and national print, online and electronic media, appearing on eight TV channels and in 20 newspapers.

In addition, AIP/AIRN team completed initial selection process of an event management firm for organizing its Agro-Tech Fair in Barisal (to be held tentatively in December 2016).

3.4 Analyze Agricultural Inputs Policy and Regulatory Constraints

3.4.1 Analyze Standards and Policy Implementation

Seed Health Standards

Revisions to the National Seed Policy, 1993 and the Seeds (Amendment) Act, 1997 and 2005 which were developed by AIP and other stakeholders are in the process of being approved by the government of Bangladesh. The revised Seed Policy and Act encourages the use of bio-technology in crop protection, allowance of genetically modified (GM) crops, and the liberalization of regulations and formalities of seed import and export which were absent in the Seeds (Amendment) Act, 1997 and 2005 (originally promulgated the Seed Ordinance in 1977).

Policy and Regulatory Constraints

AIP, as a member of the Ministry of Agriculture's (MOA) Seed Health Committee, participated in meetings to set standards for sugar cane, jute and paddy. Earlier, the committee shared health standards for potato and wheat which are now under consideration of the National Seed Board Technical Committee.

Summary of Intervention 3 Key Activities for Next Year

Multi-media Campaign

Apart from highlighting quality agro-inputs and best agronomic practices, AIP will promote branding of AIRN and its services through its "Did You Know: Quality Inputs Are Around You?" multi-media campaign. As part of the campaign, AIP will air three public service announcements (PSA) on three national television channels through Y5Q2.

Following a service agreement with ATN News to air five episodes of "Connecting Bangladesh," a Q&A session program that connects AIRN retailers (and farmers) with subject matter experts in Dhaka, will be broadcasted in Y5Q1. The key topics of the program will be AIRN and availability of quality inputs, women agro-retailers, quality seed, fertilizer, and safe use of pesticides. AIP will also continue its SMS campaign (approximately 300,000 SMS) to 27,000 retailers and farmers concentrating on promotion of AIRN's services to farmers in addition to its regular agronomic advice.

AIP will conduct an internal post-test in Y5Q2 to assess the impact of the multi-media campaign on quality inputs. In addition, an issue of AIRN newsletter (July-December 2016) will be published in January 2017. AIP will also produce an electronic success story book focusing on the successes of the AIRN and its retailers after joining AIRN. The book will be used to promote branding of AIRN among donors, FTF projects, government and other stakeholders.

International Certification Assistance and Traceability

To obtain and/or implement international certification, AIP will continue its assistance to ACI and Naafco Group apart from assessing the need of other agro-input companies for international certification. AIP will run a six-to-nine month pilot program on a standard inputs traceability system in collaboration with Win Miaki Ltd. and Naafco.

AIRN Agro-Tech Fair

AIP's third and final Agro-Tech Fair will be held (tentatively) in Y5Q1 in Barisal².

Policy and Regulatory Constraints

AIP, as a member of the MOA Seed Health Regulatory Committee will continue to work to set standards for jute, paddy, and sugar cane. In Y5, following the approval of the revised Seed Policy and Act, as well as Seed Health Standards, AIP will hold regional workshops to ensure understanding among AIRN members, DAE field officials, and other relevant stakeholders on how the revised Policy and Act reform and new health standards impact seed quality, availability of quality seed, and the seed business.

Intervention 4: Strengthening Local Organizations' Institutional Capacity

4.1 Assess Organizational Capacity of Selected Local Organizations

4.1.1 Conduct Organizational Capacity Assessments

Work under this sub-component was completed in Y3Q3.

4.2 Design and Implement Capacity Building Program for Selected Local Organizations

4.2.1 Design and Implement Organizational Capacity Development (OCD) and Improved Membership Services for Business Associations and AIRN

AIP, via CBSG, conducted OCD for two associations - BCPA and BFA - focusing on human resources (HR) policy and procedures development and financial management for improved accountability and checks-and-balances. In addition, AIP supported membership automation and website development for both organizations.

BCPA and BFA officials were trained on Quickbooks – a software program for accounting and financial management in order to upgrade financial systems. AIP also provided an operational and MIS manual to BCPA and BFA for implementing and monitoring their organizational activities effectively. Apart from this, AIP organized a joint training for BCPA and BFA on writing grant proposals for USAID funding. The participants of the training learned how to design a project, develop a logical framework, and prepare cost proposals in conformity with USAID requirements.

Summary of Intervention 4 Key Activities for Next Year

CBSG will work with BCPA to prepare a proposal to conduct the ECM pilot mentioned in section 1.2.3. In addition, CBSG will develop operational, financial and human resources manuals for AIRN to increase the organizational capacity of the network.

Apart from the above, AIP will continue its ongoing capacity building of its partner NGOs: Ashroy Foundation, AVAS, and Banchte Shekha through training on financial management, environmental compliance, and agronomic technical issues.

² Subject to availability of funding and USAID approval of branding and marking waiver.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Gender

Capacity Building of Women Retailers

As of the end of Y4Q4, 164 women were approved for AIP grants while applications of 21 potential grantees awaited final approval from USAID. Though its target for Y4 was 284 grants, AIP faced challenges mainly due to limited acceptance of women's entrepreneurship in agro-inputs in AIP's working area as well as a lack of women applicants meeting the minimum educational and financial grants program criteria.

In order to recruit women grantees, AIP and its partner NGOs (PNGOs) organized 105 public meetings and received 1,222 primary grant applications. The project also assisted 158 women agro-inputs retailers to obtain seed licenses from the Ministry of Agriculture.



Eleven “champion” female retailers (AIP grantees) receive crests for their leadership and success in the agro-inputs business.

Photo Credit: AIP/AIRN

In September 2016, AIP organized a celebration of 150 women agro-retailers (grantees) in Khulna to promote their progress. The Khulna Divisional Commissioner presided over the event as chief guest, with representatives from government agencies, NGOs, USAID/FTF projects, journalists, private agro-inputs companies and others in attendance. The event was also covered by numerous print and online newspapers as well as TV channels. AIP will work closely with the divisional commissioner's office to try to obtain registration for women retailers to sell fertilizers, as fertilizer licenses are often limited and difficult to obtain.

AIRN signed its first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with bKash (Bangladesh's largest and most utilized mobile-money service) for AIRN women retailers to act as bKash agents to create additional income generation during periods of low agro-input sales (off-season).

Mobilizing community support

To introduce women grantees as agro-inputs retailers at the community level, as well as to draw support from local leaders, 25 village based garnering sessions were organized in Y5. At the events, participants included the Deputy Director-DAE, *upazila* Agriculture Officers, Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officers, local government representatives, local elites, religious leaders, farmers, and community members, all present to express their commitment to provide grantees business-related support.

Environment

As per AIP's Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP), 66 AIRN retailers' (including 34 women grantees) shops were monitored using AIP monitoring checklists. The physical environment of the shops, such as product arrangement as per the WHO color safety code, safe keeping of pesticide materials, proper shop ventilation, hand-washing arrangements, and use of gloves and masks while handling the pesticides were found to be

adequate.

It was found that approximately 60% of retailers kept personal protective equipment (masks and gloves) in their shops for sale while around 80% of retailers use gloves while dealing with pesticides and actively gave suggestions to the farmers on post-spraying hygiene. However, the presence of children within some of the female retailers' shops was still a concern during the monitoring process. Therefore, AIP counseled the concerned retailers that the presence of children in inputs shops may increase the risk of health hazards (exposure to chemicals). While it is understood by the project that the presence of children in female retailer shops is often unavoidable, AIP will continue to provide guidance regarding the safe usage and storage of potentially harmful chemicals to avoid contact with children.

Summary of Crosscutting and Project Management Key Activities for Next Year

Gender and Grants

In Y5, AIP will promote the in-kind grants program through advertisements in local newspapers, announcements, poster and leaflet distribution, public meetings, assistance from DAE and others. AIP will continue to work with grantees through agreement signing ceremonies, completion of in-kind asset transfer, and assistance with shop organization, quarterly learning/sharing meetings, and capacity building in order to promote the long-term success of the retail shops.

In Y5Q1, AIP will conduct a qualitative gender assessment aligned with the project's Gender Analysis in 2013, to analyze changes in empowerment amongst AIP's male and female beneficiaries.

To enhance the technical and business knowledge of women retailers and linkages with relevant stakeholders, AIP will identify and engage AIRN male retailers as mentors for 225 women retailers. In addition, AIP will engage 14 women champions to meet regularly with new grantees to offer advice and mentoring (10-12 grantees each). This will create strong linkages among the grantees and support their success in agri-business.

Environment

AIP will organize 10 sessions on safe use of pesticides during Farmers Field Days (FFDs) around winter demo plots. Refresher trainings on safe use of pesticides will be organized for 120 AIRN retailers including women grantees. In addition, shops of 220 AIRN retailers (100 women) will be monitored following EMMP checklist.

Success Story



AIRN Agro-Tech Fair Promotes Quality Inputs and New Technologies

Farmers in Bangladesh's southern districts, in general, have limited awareness and access to quality agro-inputs (seed, fertilizer and pesticide). They also have inadequate knowledge on advanced agricultural technologies which hampers higher yields. In order to create greater awareness on quality inputs and cutting edge technologies, the Agro-Inputs Retailers' Network (AIRN) organized an Agro-Tech Fair in Jessore in March 2016, with the support of the USAID/Agro-Inputs Project (AIP) and the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Jessore.

With the theme "Did You Know: Quality Agro Inputs Are Around You?" AIRN organized its second Agro-Tech Fair with the purpose of showcasing quality agro-inputs, as well as innovative and environmentally sound technologies and services. At the Fair, 30 private companies and governmental and development agencies displayed more than 40 new products and services. Companies promoted new hybrid seed varieties, micro-nutrient fertilizer blends, crop protection products (CPPs), floriculture and nursery products, and agro-tech machineries, such as rice transplanters. The two-day fair attracted 10,000 visitors.

Jessore is a southern district town well known for its diverse crop cultivation, especially vegetables. According to guests and participants of the Fair, "The Fair is a well-timed initiative as it inspires farmers to use quality inputs such as high yielding and saline tolerant varieties of crops, specialized pesticides suited for these southern areas, micro-nutrient fertilizers, and cutting edge agro-machineries."

The Fair's Chief Guest, Dr. Md. Humayun Kabir, Deputy Commissioner, Jessore remarked, "The Fair has created a great opportunity to promote quality inputs and modern technologies among farmers and other stakeholders of the southern districts." He urged farmers to be active in using modern agro-technologies, as agricultural land is decreasing

but production can increase by using quality inputs and agro-machineries.

Nitya Ranjan Biswas, Additional Director, DAE, Jessore, the Fair's Special Guest, commented,



Visitors collect informational materials from the AIRN stall.

Photo credit: AIP/AIRN

"While agricultural production in the southern area of the country has improved, farmers still frequently face challenges due to salinity, natural disaster, and climate change issues. Hence, the quality agricultural inputs and technologies displayed in this Fair will support farmers to meet these challenges effectively."

The Fair played a vital role as an outreach event to promote quality inputs and share information about the Agro-Inputs Retailers' Network (AIRN) whose 3000 members are committed to selling quality inputs and providing advisory services to farmers in 20 southern districts.

News of the Fair was widely covered in local and national newspapers, online and on TV channels. In addition, during the Fair hundreds of posters, stickers, leaflets, and brochures on quality inputs, nutrition, safe and judicious use of pesticides, and the role of women in agro-retailing were shared with information seekers. A printed souvenir (memento) also published containing articles on AIRN and quality inputs.

Annex 1: Monitoring and Evaluation

In November 2015, AIP revised its M&E Plan (for the second time) and got approval from USAID/Bangladesh. The number of indicators in the revised M&E Plan was reduced from 13 to 11 (including one process and two cross cutting indicators). AIP's current indicators include two FTF indicators to facilitate USAID/Bangladesh's annual reporting, and nine custom and cross cutting indicators as established by USAID/Bangladesh as part of its Development Objective 2 (DO 2) PMP.

In June 2015, USAID/Bangladesh and ACME project jointly conducted a Data Quality Assessment (DQA) for AIP to assess the strengths and weaknesses of reported data and overall data management systems following the five data quality standards (validity, reliability, integrity, precision, timeliness), and released the report in November 2015. Following the recommendations from the DQA, AIP has taken the following steps:

- a) Updated the data collection manual, and organized capacity building session for the Program Officers, who collect data from the primary beneficiaries;
- b) Revised the logbook maintained by AIRN retailers by adding more information to ensure proper recording of input sales and farmers' information;
- c) Strengthened existing ways to reduce double counting of indirect beneficiaries (farmers).

In August, 2016, ACME and USAID/Bangladesh jointly followed up to assess the progress in implementing the DQA recommendations, and are currently developing a report.

In Y4, the M&E Unit designed a categorization³ exercise of AIRN retailers to better understand the capacity of the retailers after training and other outreach from AIP, with an ultimate objective to further capacity building for the low and mid-level performers. The AIP Program Officers (POs) have categorized the accredited retailers into three categories in Y4 and the findings of this in-house exercise will be validated by a third-party surveyor in Y5Q1 through a sample survey.

The AIP M&E Unit has developed an online data collection and management system to move from the existing on line file sharing platform (Dropbox), which will allow program staff to seek query-based data/information directly. In Y4, AIP's M&E and IT staff developed this online database, and an external consultant is currently vetting the program before launching it in Y5Q1.

As of the end of Y4, AIP has made the following progress against its indicators:

1. Total sales of quality inputs by AIRN retailers (custom indicator)

AIP set a target to induct and certify 3,000 agro-inputs retailers over the life of the project who sell quality agricultural inputs in the 20 FTF districts. This indicator directly collects the sales amount from the accredited retailers' sales registers (logbook)⁴, where the retailers

³ Categorization is based on several criteria including: application of safe and judicious use of agro-inputs, maintenance of sales records, embedded services offered to farmers, proper shop set-up, etc.

⁴ The logbook, introduced by AIP for the retailers to record sales and contact address of client farmers, has proved to be very effective for multiple purposes. Retailers use these systematic records for business promotion and providing follow up support to farmer-customers, which has also been valuable for AIP in

record client-wise sales. AIP is tracking the progress of its objective titled “improved supply of quality agricultural inputs through input retailers” through this indicator.

To date, AIP has achieved 70.3% of the total target (\$100m). This level of achievement in Y4 is satisfactory compared to the LOP target, particularly when one notes that AIP only began reporting on this indicator in Y2Q3, beginning with sales data from only five accredited retailers. In a period of 27 months, the number has gradually grown to reach 2,751 retailers by the end of Y4.

Table 1: Total sales of quality inputs by AIRN Accredited retailers

| Indicator | LOP Target \$) | Achieved in Y4Q4 (\$) | Achievement in Y4(\$) | Achievement (Cumulative) (\$) | Cumulative Sales (\$) by sex |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Sales of quality inputs | 100 million | 14,847,235 | 56,206,577 | 70,394,280 | Male retailers – 69,577,033 Female retailers -817,247 |
| Sales of quality inputs per retailer | 33,333 | 5,397 | 25,793 | 28,668 | Male retailers -29,278 Female retailers -10,705 |

Per retailer sales volume is relatively on target (\$28,668 against the target \$33,333), when the length of accredited status per retailer is considered (see Table 2). The sales volume saw a significant increase in this reporting year due to AIP’s redoubled efforts in Y4 to enhance retailers’ capacity to provide quality embedded services to clients, building awareness among the farmers through mass media campaign and branding AIRN retailers as sources of “quality” inputs across FTF working areas.

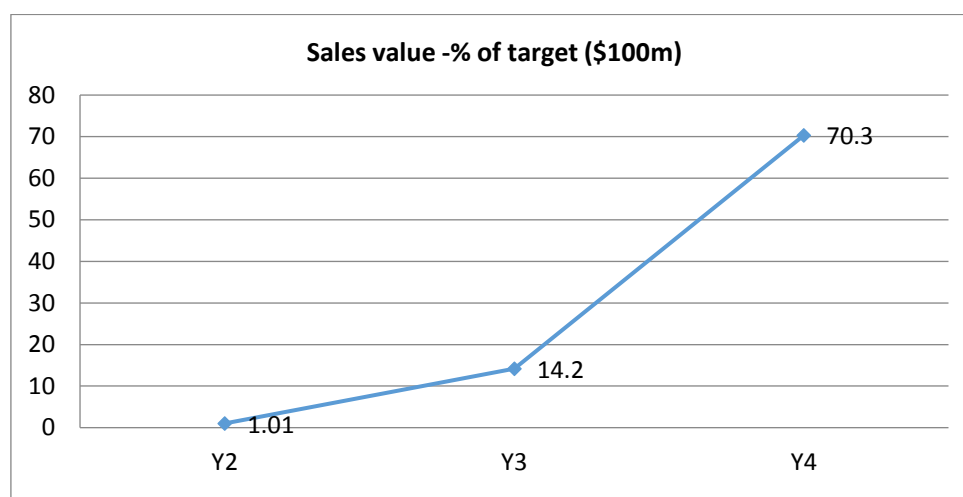
Table 2: No. of AIRN Accredited retailers (by joining date)

| Year | Quarter | No. of accredited retailers | | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| | | Male | Female | Total |
| Year 2 | Quarter 2 | 5 | - | 5 |
| | Quarter 3 | 138 | - | 138 |
| | Quarter 4 | 177 | 2 | 179 |
| Year 3 | Quarter 1 | 327 | 1 | 328 |
| | Quarter 2 | 178 | 2 | 180 |
| | Quarter 3 | 294 | 1 | 295 |
| | Quarter 4 | 367 | 12 | 379 |
| Year 4 | Quarter 1 | 203 | 5 | 208 |
| | Quarter 2 | 325 | 46 | 371 |
| | Quarter 3 | 287 | 3 | 290 |
| | Quarter 4 | 322 | 42 | 364 |
| Total | | 2,637 | 114 | 2,751 |

Considering the rate of annual growth in sales (from 14.2% in Y3 to 70.3% in Y4), it is highly likely that AIP will meet the LOP target by Y5.

disseminating information on quality inputs via its mass media campaign. In addition, the data recorded and preserved by the beneficiaries provide strong evidence to USAID’s Data Quality Standards (DQS), which is also a unique opportunity to engage beneficiaries in generating M&E data.

Figure 1: Trend of sales over the reporting period-compared to the target



Despite the fact that AIP is on the verge of meeting the sales target in Y5, the retailers are often unable able to record all sales information during peak cropping season. The M&E Unit will estimate the amount of unrecorded sales in Y5Q2 through a rapid survey.

2. Number of farmers purchasing inputs from AIRN retailers (custom indicator)

Over the life of the project, 3,000 certified retailers are to reach 1 million smallholder farmers in 20 FTF districts with quality inputs and embedded services. This indicator counts the number of smallholder farmers (owning 5 hectares or less of arable land) who purchase agricultural inputs from AIRN Accredited retailers. Measuring the indicator requires counting the unique number of farmers, irrespective of number of purchases.

As of September 2016, 2,751 accredited retailers covered 73% of the total target farmers. The critical aspect of measuring this indicator is to separate the farmers as “new” and “old” farmers⁵ by the respective retailers. Apart from retailers’ efforts to make the distinction, AIP has tried to avoid the double counting of farmers via a database storing the farmers’ cell phone numbers as a matching variable by each retailer and across retailers. This way of avoiding double counting was found to be complicated, as cell phone usage patterns in rural areas are different than in urban Bangladesh; many farmers reported that they do not use a particular cell phone number; rather, a number is being used by various family members. To address the problem, AIP began using composite variables (farmer’s name, father’s name, village, etc.) to ensure that data points match.

Table 3: No. of AIRN farmer customers

| Target – No. of farmers over LOP | Target – No. of farmers per retailer over LOP | Achievement - No. of farmers in Y4Q4 | Achievement Y4 | Achievement - No. of farmers (cumulative) | Achievement - No. of farmers per retailer, as of Y4 |
|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|----------------|---|---|
| 1,000,000 | 333 | 84,797 | 413,969 | 729,964 | 265 |

⁵ In the case where a farmer purchases more than once from an accredited retailer, he or she is still counted only once (old), while he or she will be treated as ‘new’ in case of first purchase. In addition, if more than one farmer in a household is purchasing inputs, all the farmers in a household will be counted.

In line with the sales volume, the number of client-farmers also increased from 31.6% coverage (against set target) by the end of Y3 to 73% by the end of Y4. With the current pace, it is highly likely that the retailer will meet the LOP target (one million) by the end of Y5.

3. Number of agro-input retailers in the network (custom indicator)

This indicator counts the number of retailers who join AIRN to offer quality inputs and embedded services to the smallholder farmers. AIP provisioned two main types of memberships, a) Associate Member and b) Accredited Member. The associate members are those who are committed to sell quality inputs, and have retail shop with license from government's authority. For an associate retailer to become an AIRN accredited retailer (symbolized by a signboard/logo of AIRN), he/she must complete and pass AIRN's business management and technical training. This process indicator counts both types of retailers.

Table 4: Number of agro-input retailers in the network

| Division | Target | Achievement in Y4Q4 | Achievement in Y4 | Achievement (Cumulative) |
|--------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Barisal | 3,000 | 45 | 133 | 653 |
| Dhaka | | 37 | 152 | 580 |
| Khulna | | 132 | 493 | 2,113 |
| Total | 3,000 | 214 | 778 | 3,346 |

As of September, 2016, a total of 3,346 retailers have joined AIRN, among them, 2,751 accredited members (have adopted the AIRN Code of Conduct and undergone requisite training) while others are in the pipeline to be accredited in the near future. The current pace of implementation is conducive to reaching the target due to its expanding relationship with related stakeholders.

4. Number of MSMEs, including farmers, receiving business development services from USG-assisted sources (FTF indicator)

This FTF indicator counts the number of retailers completing and passing Business Management Training (BMT). AIP jointly organizes this customized training course with six agro-input companies for respective companies' retailers. The topics include: business management, safe use of pesticide, agronomics, and nutrition. AIP directly organizes the same training through a pool of trainers associated with GMark Consulting Ltd. for the retailers beyond the six companies. In Y3, AIP introduced advanced training courses for AIRN retailers to further strengthen their skill on selected technical aspects and business management.

Table 5: Number of MSMEs, received training by division

| Training Type | Target | Achievement in Y4 | LOP Achievement (Cumulative) |
|------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Business Management Training (BMT) | 3,000 | 1,168 | 3,269 |
| Advance Training | | 118 | 249 |
| Total | 3,000 | 1,286 | 3,518 |

In Year 4, AIP has exceeded its target (1,200) set forth in Y 4 Implementation Plan by providing training to 1,286 individuals with a cumulative achievement of 3,518.

Providing advance training to a total of 118 accredited retailers seems to be very useful in terms of providing “embedded” services to client-farmers on agronomic practices and safe and judicious use of agro-inputs, especially pesticides.

5. Number of AIRN retailers with increasing application and adoption of quality standards for agricultural inputs (custom indicator)

AIP tracks the number of retailers who apply and adopt quality standards for each input category (seed, fertilizer and crop protection product) because of AIP facilitation. This custom indicator also measures the smallholder farmers served by AIRN retailers to see the level of application and adoption of the same learned through interaction with AIRN retailers.

To determine the attribution to AIP, this measurement includes control experimentation, which includes four separate groups: AIRN retailers and smallholder farmers served by AIRN retailers (program groups) and non-AIRN retailers and smallholder farmers served by non-AIRN retailers (control groups). In Y3Q4, AIP measured the progress by designing a proxy indicator (survey document) which is closely related to the government standard documents as its measure of this indicator (survey was conducted by a third party). AIP will repeat the study in Y5 as a follow up to compare the progress over the period.

For this study, representative samples were drawn from both “program” and “control” groups for retailers and smallholder farmers. The population size of program retailers was 650 (those enrolled as AIRN accredited retailers before January 1, 2015) and smallholder farmers was 30,000 (those listed as clients before October 1, 2014), while appropriate sampling techniques were followed to select samples from control groups (retailers and smallholder farmers). The findings of the study were shared in a previous reporting year (Y3).

In a more overarching attempt to improve the quality of inputs, AIP has been supporting the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) to set seed health standards for four major crops (rice, wheat, jute and potato). The committee has been successful in organizing the creation of seven standards of seed health for wheat and potato for approval by the National Seed Board. These standards already exist to some extent, but are not regulated by the National Seed Board or the MOA. They study on quality standards, planned for year 5, will incorporate those into the assessment.

6. Number of retailers who adopted the Seal of Quality (new) (custom indicator)

This indicator counts the number of AIRN accredited retailers who offer quality inputs and embedded services to the smallholder farmers. For a retailer, the prerequisite of having the AIRN certification (symbolized by a signboard/logo of AIRN) is to join AIRN and to complete and pass AIRN’s business and technical training.

As of the end of Y4, a total of 2,751 agro-input retailers were enrolled as accredited retailers; another 595 retailers are listed as associate retailers, and are in the pipeline to become accredited retailers by Y5Q1. AIP has adopted specific and realistic approaches to meet the targets, included in the Y5 Implementation Plan.

Table 6: No. of retailers who adopted the seal of quality by division

| Division | Target | Achievement in Y4Q4 | Achievement in Y4 | Achievement (Cumulative) |
|--------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Barisal | 3,000 | 80 | 246 | 520 |
| Dhaka | | 58 | 245 | 429 |
| Khulna | | 226 | 756 | 1,802 |
| Total | 3,000 | 364 | 1,247 | 2,751 |

In Year 4, AIRN shifted to becoming a legal entity registered with the GoB Registrar of Joint Stock Company and Firms as a not-for-profit company. This registration offers legitimacy to AIRN as a stand-alone local entity and bodes well for its sustainability after the close of AIP. Also in Year 4, AIRN democratically elected the office bearers for local level (*upazila*) and central level (Board of Directors (BoD)). With all these achievements, especially for the efforts taken in Year 4, AIRN is now emerging as a common business platform for its members and trusted service provider in the FTF Zone.

7. Number of accredited retailers who are declared as Champion Retailers (custom indicator)

AIP adopted this indicator in the revised M&E Plan (revised in Sept., 2015) and finalized a set of selection criterion for these championships, included in the Implementation Plan. The activity was initially planned to take place in Y4Q4, but has been deferred to Y5Q1 in order to capitalize the findings of internal and external categorization exercises of accredited retailers.

8. Number of analysis and stakeholder consultation conducted on policies regulating agricultural input industry (custom indicator)

AIP engages national level input associations and private companies to strengthen input supply chains and guard the interest of both farmers and input retailers.

Since the program inception, AIP has completed a review of the 11 sections of the National Seed Policy of 1993 with the Bangladesh Seed Association (BSA) and leading agro-input companies, and formally submitted this review to the Seed Wing of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA). As part of the process, AIP successfully analyzed (Stage 1) the existing policy, and organized public debate (Stage 2) with relevant agro-input associations, companies, and Bangladesh Policy Research and Strategy Support Program (BPRSSP) to engage in a dialogue around modifications to the seed policy that could benefit stakeholders.

In Year 4, as a member of Seed Health Committee of National Seed Board, under MOA, AIP has supported the committee to draft a proposal on fixing seed health standards, which has been submitted to the Board in September, 2016.

9. Number of individuals who have received USG supported short-term agricultural sector productivity or food security training (FTF indicator)

This FTF indicator measures the number of individuals who have gained significant knowledge or skill through interactions that are intentional, structured, and purposed. In AIP, this includes entrepreneurs (agro-input retailers), representatives of private sectors, agro-inputs companies, and extension agents/specialists of government and non-government organizations. The specific capacity building events include Training of

Trainers (ToT), day-long workshops, agricultural exhibitions, and study tour/learning visit.

Table 7: Number of individuals who have received USG supported short-term agricultural sector productivity or food security training

| Division | Target in Y4 | Achievement in Y4Q4 | Achievement in Y4 | Achievement (Cumulative) |
|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Training of Trainers (ToT) | 190 | - | 58 | 147 |
| Study Tour | | 19 | 210 | 309 |
| Total | 190 | 19⁶ | 268 | 456 |

In Year 4, AIP introduced a collaborative training with Syngenta and Director General of Health Services (DGHS) to increase doctor's capacity to make quick diagnosis and treatment decision on pesticides-exposed patients in the FTF Zone.

AIP also organized several study tours for accredited retailers including AIRN office bearers at home and abroad in this reporting year. A group of nine retailers went on a 10-day long extensive study tour to Thailand to observe and learn about the functioning of different agro-based associations and co-operatives, and to gain in-depth understanding about quality aspects of agro-inputs by visiting several reputed companies, such an exposure was useful when AIRN is emerging as a common business platform for its members.

Indicator-wise data (FTF + Custom with Cross-Cutting) are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Summary of Planned M&E Key Activities for Year 5

1. Institutionalize an online database for internal stakeholders as a source of broad-based, user-friendly information for programmatic decision making, in addition to M&E and reporting purposes.
2. Publish validation findings of internal categorization exercise by a third party to develop further capacity building initiatives for retailers and feed the findings into selecting "champion" retailers.
3. Develop an exit plan to pursue M&E activities in the final year, especially carrying out the planned studies and supporting final evaluation, and other *ad hoc* studies and activities as reveals necessary in the final year.
4. Develop an archive to preserve all M&E reports, databases, and project key documents to support reporting, studies, and evaluations.
5. Carry out a follow up study on "Application and Adoption of Quality Standards for Agricultural inputs."
6. Support Final Evaluation team, commissioned by USAID/Bangladesh.

⁶ As per counting procedure of USAID M&E standard, 4 retailers have participated in more than one events in Y4, thus the figure counted as 19, instead of 23.

Table 1: Feed the Future Indicators

7.

| # | Name of Indicator | Classifications | Unit of Measure | Disaggregated by | Baseline | Target and Achievement | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-------|
| | | | | | | Target Y 4 | Achievement in Y4Q4 | Achievement in Y4 | Achievement Cumulative (LOP) | |
| 1. | Number of MSMEs, including farmers, receiving business development services from USG-assisted sources | FTF Indicator # 4.5.2-37 | Number | Size : | Micro | 0 | 1,200 | 289 | 1,286 | 3,518 |
| | | | | | Small | 0 | | - | - | - |
| | | | | | Medium | 0 | | - | - | - |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 1,200 | 289 | 1,286 | 3,518 |
| | | | | MSME Type | Seed | 0 | | - | 7 | 8 |
| | | | | | Fertilizer | 0 | | - | 3 | 3 |
| | | | | | Agro-Chemical | 0 | | - | 6 | 6 |
| | | | | | Mixed Variety | 0 | | 289 | 1,270 | 3,501 |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 1,200 | 289 | 1,286 | 3,518 |
| | | | | Sex | Male | 0 | | 211 | 1,153 | 3,366 |
| | | | | | Female | 0 | | 78 | 133 | 152 |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 1,200 | 289 | 1,286 | 3,518 |
| 2. | Number of Individuals who have received USG supported short-term agricultural sector productivity or food security training | FTF Indicator # 4.5.2-7: | Number | Type of individuals | Producers | 0 | - | - | - | - |
| | | | | | People in government | 0 | 5 | - | 58 | 58 |
| | | | | | People in private sector firms | 0 | 175 | 19 | 197 | 370 |
| | | | | | People in civil society | 0 | 10 | - | 13 | 28 |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 190 | - | 268 | 456 |
| | | | | Sex | Male | 0 | 170 | 5 | 231 | 404 |
| | | | | | Female | 0 | 20 | 14 | 37 | 52 |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 190 | 19 | 268 | 456 |

Table 2: Custom and Cross-cutting Indicators

| # | Name of Indicator | Classifications | Unit of Measure | Disaggregated by | | Baseline | Target and Achievement | | | |
|-------------------|---|-----------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| | | | | | | | Target Y4 | Achievement in Y4Q4 | Achievement in Y4 | Achievement Cumulative (LOP) |
| Custom indicators | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Total sales of quality inputs by certified retailers annually | Custom | US dollar | Sex of retailers | Male | 0 | 19,000,000 | 14,720,939 | 55,522,334 | 69,577,033 |
| | | | | | Female | 0 | 1,000,000 | 126,297 | 684,243 | 817,247 |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 20,000,000 | 14,847,236 | 56,206,577 | 70,394,280 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. | Number of farmers purchasing inputs from AIRN accredited retailers | Custom | Number of farmers | Sex of farmers | Male | 0 | 339,500 | 83,690 | 408,960 | 722,177 |
| | | | | | Female | 0 | 10,500 | 1,107 | 5,009 | 7,787 |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 350,000 | 84,797 | 413,969 | 729,964 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. | Number of Agro-Inputs Retailers in the Network | Custom | Number of retailers | Sex of retailers | Male | 0 | 3,425 | 188 | 659 | 3,194 |
| | | | | | Female | 0 | 200 | 26 | 119 | 152 |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 3,625 | 214 | 778 | 3,346 |
| | | | | Type of retailers | Seed | 0 | | - | - | 3 |
| | | | | | Fertilizer | 0 | | - | - | - |
| | | | | | CPP | 0 | | - | - | 1 |
| | | | | | Mixed variety | 0 | 3,625 | 214 | 778 | 3,342 |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 3,625 | 214 | 778 | 3,346 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Number of AIRN retailers with increasing application and adoption of quality standards for agricultural inputs ⁷ | Custom | Number of retailers and farmers | Sex of retailers | Male | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | | Female | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | Sex of farmers | Male | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | | Female | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | Type of standards | Seeds | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | | Fertilizer | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | | CPP | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | | | | |

⁷ A study has been carried out by a third-party consultant in Y3 and the detailed findings were mentioned in the last report (Y3Q4).

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------|--|-------------------|---------------|---|-------|-----|-------|----------------|
| 5 | Number of retailers who adopted AIRN Logo | Custom | Number of retailers | Sex of retailers | Male | 0 | 1350 | 322 | 1,151 | 2,637 |
| | | | | | Female | 0 | 150 | 42 | 96 | 114 |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 1,500 | 364 | 1,247 | 2,751 |
| | | | | Type of retailers | Seed | 0 | | - | - | 3 |
| | | | | | Fertilizer | 0 | | - | - | - |
| | | | | | CPP | 0 | | - | - | 1 |
| | | | | | Mixed variety | 0 | 1,500 | 364 | 1,247 | 2747 |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 1,500 | 364 | 1,247 | 2,751 |
| 6. | Number of accredited retailers declared as champion retailers | Custom | Number of retailers | Sex of retailers | Male | 0 | 110 | | | |
| | | | | | Female | 0 | 15 | | | |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 125 | | | |
| | | | | Type of retailers | Seed | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | | Fertilizer | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | | CPP | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | | Mixed variety | 0 | 125 | | | |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 125 | | | |
| 7. | Number of analysis and stakeholder consultation conducted on policies regulating agricultural inputs industry | Custom | Number of policies/regulations/administrative procedures | Sector | Seed | 0 | 1 | | | 1 |
| | | | | | Fertilizer | 0 | | | | |
| | | | | | Total | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 ⁸ |
| Cross cutting indicators | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. | Strengthened organizational capacities of local organizations | Cross cutting (CC) | Percent | None | | 0 | 1 | | | 1 ⁹ |
| 9. | Collaborative initiatives increased | CC | No. of organization | Partner | Category | | | | | |

⁸ AIP successfully advanced GoB Seed Policy. The revised draft policy is forwarded to Ministry of Law and Ministry of Agriculture for approval through Seed Regulatory Reform Committee, AIP is one of the members of the committee

⁹ Organizational Capacity Assessment of the Bangladesh Seed Association yielded 38.5 (of 100) baseline against the 8 fields within USAID's financial pre-award criteria.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|----------|------------------|
| | | | / institute/co mpany | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | FTF Implementer s | | | | 1 | 5 ¹⁰ |
| | | | | | Input Association | | | | | 4 ¹¹ |
| | | | | | Input private companies | | | | 1 | 12 ¹² |
| | | | | | Government | | | | | 5 |
| | | | | | Private (for- profit) companies | | | | 1 | 1 ¹³ |
| | | | | | Total | | | | 3 | 27 |

¹⁰ Organized demonstration plot and training.

¹¹ Four input associations participated with AIP in policy advocacy issues, while three of them participated in int'l study tour and one participated in AIP's organizational capacity strengthening efforts. The number of association/organization/company is counted once, irrespective of number of events they participated in.

¹² Jointly organized demonstration plots with input companies and training courses

¹³ Signed MOU with bKash (a mobile financial service provider) to support approximately 100 rural women retailers in supplementing their income through provision of mobile financial services (along with their regular input business).

